

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3910

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

AMCONSUL DOUALA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 3146

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, MORG, SOPN, NI, UK

SUBJ: FMG MAKES PUBLIC DETAILS OF ABORTIVE COUP: GOWON IMPLICATED

SUMMARY: IN MARCH 12 STATEMENT TO PRESS CHIEF OF STAFF BIG.
YAR'ADUA DESCRIBED FMG'S VERSION OF FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING
UP TO COUP ATTEMPT OF FEBRUARY 13, DECLARING "IRREFUTABLE
EVIDENCE" SHOWED GENERAL GOWON WAS INVOLVED AND REVEALING THAT HE
HAS "BEEN ASKED TO COME AND DEFEND HIMSELF." MAJOR THRUST OF
STATEMENT, HOWEVER, WAS ON CENTRAL ROLE OF JUST-EXECUTED MAJ.
GEN. BISALLA IN PLOT. STATEMENT CONTAINED NOTHING ABOUT
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ALLEGED FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT OTHER THAN GOWON CONNECTION. INSTEAD,

YAR'ADUA STRESSED ROLE OF DISGRUNTLED MAJORS, LT. COLS. AND COLONELS AND WENT TO SOME LENGTHS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT DISGRUNTLEMENT OVER DEMOBILIZATION AND PROMOTIONS WAS UNJUSTIFIED. YAR'ADUA WAS CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE COUP PLOTTERS CONCERN THAT NIGERIA WAS "GOING COMMUNIST," SAYING ONLY, "GENTLEMEN I LEAVE IT TO YOU TO JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES." HE CLOSED WITH REVELATION THAT "A NUMBER OF PEOPLE" HAD FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE PLOT, BUT FAILED TO REPORT IT TO THE AUTHORITIES SAYING THAT "THIS HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR VIGILANCE". END SUMMARY.

1. CHIEF OF STAFF SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, BRIGADIER SHEHU YAR'ADUA READ STATEMENT TO NEWSMEN MARCH 12 REVEALING FMG'S VERSION OF FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO COUP ATTEMPT OF FEB 13, COVERING

FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS:

A. MAJORS IN KADUNA, INCLUDING A MAJ. DABANG (EXECUTED) BEGAN

PLOT BECAUSE THEY WERE DISCONTENTED ABOUT A "CONVERSION EXERCISE" (MEANING UNCLEAR) IN WHICH THEY WERE PARTICIPATING.

B. SIMULTANEOUSLY MAJ. GEN. BISALLA STARTED PLOT ON HIS OWN

COMPOSED MAINLY OF DISGRUNTLED COLONELS AND LT. COLS. "THE TWO GROUPS SOON GOT TO KNOW OF THEIR MUTUAL EXISTENCE."

C. AROUND THIS TIME DIMKA TRAVELLED TO MADRID ON OFFICIAL DUTIES. ENROUTE HE MET A RETIRED SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO IS NOW UNDER ARREST (BELIEVED TO BE ALHAJI SULE KOLO, FORMER HIGH COMMISSIONER TO UK), WHOM HE TOLD OF DISCONTENT "WITH THE WAY THE COUNTRY WAS BEING GOVERNED." THE RETIRED OFFICIAL INVITED HIM TO SPEND A FEW DAYS IN LONDON FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS.

D. IN LONDON QTE DIMKA MET AND HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH GENERAL GOWON WHO TOLD HIM THAT EVERYTHING WAS READY AND HE, DIMKA, WOULD BE FULLY BRIEFED BY BISALLA ON HIS RETURN TO NIGERIA. BASED ON IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE OBTAINED BY THE BOARD OF INQUIRY, GOWON HAS ALREADY BEEN ASKED TO COME AND DEFEND HIMSELF. UNQTE.

E. IN LAGOS BISALLA TOLD HIS REASONS FOR PLOTTING: THE PROPOSED DEMOBILIZATION, PROMOTIONS WITHIN THE ARMY, AND THE ALLEGATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS GOING COMMUNIST. HE TOLD DIMKA TO BEGIN OPERATIONAL DISCUSSIONS WITH DABANG AND OTHERS.

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F. AT A SECOND MEETING BETWEEN DIMKA AND OUSAJWAO# IN KADUNA, BISALLA DISCLOSED THE SMC'S DECISION ON CREATING OF

NEW STATES AND THE CONVERSION OF THE EX-MILITARY GOVERNORS' RETIREMENTS TO DISMISSALS. HE ADVISED PLOTTERS TO AWAIT UNTIL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THESE DECISIONS "AS THIS WILL PROVIDE A MORE FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR A COUP."

G. ON FEBRUARY 1, BISALLA DIRECTED DIMKA TO STAGE THE COUP

ON FEBRUARY 13. DIMKA OBJECTED BUT WAS OVERRULED BECAUSE
"BISALLA WANTED A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT BEFORE THE BUDGET."
HE DESIGNATED THE OFFICERS TO BE IN CHARGE OF OPERATIONS
IN VARIOUS CITIES, AND QTE FURTHER INSTRUCTED DIMKA TO MAKE
NO MISTAKE ABOUT THE ELIMINATION OF THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS:
GENERAL MURTALA MUHAMMED, LT. GENERAL OBASANJO, LT. GEN. DANJUMA,
BRIG. YAR'ADUA AND LT. COL. BABINGIDA.

H. THE PLOTTERS BEGAN ASSEMBLING ABOUT 0530 FEBRUARY 13
AND DEPLOYED FROM DIMKA'S HOUSE. APPARENTLY A LT. WILLIAM SERI,
SINCE EXECUTED, WAS THE FIRST MEMBER OF DIMKA'S GROUP TO OPEN
FIRE ON MUHAMMED. AFTER SHOOTING THE HEAD OF STATE, DIMKA AND HIS
FELLOW ASSASSINS RAN INTO THE NIGERIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION
BUILDING WHERE THEY MET MALAM ABDULKARIM ZAKARI (EXECUTED)
"WHO HAD ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS IN N.B.C."

2. YAH'ADUA THEN ADDRESSED THE ISSUES OF DEMOBILIZATION AND
PROMOTION, WHICH HE SAID "FEATURED AS THE MAIN REASONS GIVEN BY THE
DISSIDENTS FOR THE ATTEMPTED COUP." HE DESCRIBED ARMY CHIEF OF
STAFF DANJUMA'S INSISTENCE "THAT ALL THE EX-SERVICEMEN ACTUALLY
RECEIVE THEIR RETIREMENT BENEFITS BEFORE THEY FINALLY LEAVE...
THERE WAS NO TIME THAT THIS REGIME EVER MENTIONED KICKING OUT ANY
SOLDIERS INTO THE STREET." HE REVEALED THAT THE NAVY,
AIR FORCE, POLICE AND CUSTOMS "HAVE ALL BEEN STOPPED FROM FURTHER
RECRUITMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE REABSORPTION OF THE AFFECTED
TROOPS." YAR'ADUA SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH BISALLA KNEW THAT
DEMOBILIZATION WAS INTENDED TO STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL DEFENSE,
HE STILL OPPOSED IT.

NOTE BY OCT: LAGOS 3146 (1 OF 2); #AS RECEIVED (PARA 1F)

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3911

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA
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3. REGARDING PROMOTIONS, YAR'ADUA DEFENDED THE FMG'S POLICIES OF PROMOTING ON MERIT AND AVAILABILITY OF VACANCIES. HE IMPLIED THAT THE PLOTTERS WANTED "INDISCRIMINATE PROMOTIONS BASED ONLY ON LENGTH OF SERVICE" WITHOUT REGARD FOR MERIT," WHICH IN THE PAST HAD UNDERMINED THE MORALE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ARMY.

4. THEN YAR'ADUA TURNED TO THE ALLEGATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS

GOING COMMUNIST. HIS VOICE WAS FILLED WITH DISDAIN AS HE SAID, "GENTLEMEN, I LEAVE IT TO YOU TO JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES," OR WORDS TO THAT EFFECT; THE STATEMENT DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRINTED TRANSCRIPT.

5. YAR'ADUA CLAIMED THE PLOTTERS PLANNED TO REVERSE THE DECISIONS OF THE ASSETS INVESTIGATION PANEL AND TO REINSTATE RETIRED OFFICERS INCLUDING THE EX-MILITARY GOVERNORS AND GENERAL GOWON.

6. HE THEN DECLARED THAT A NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAD FORE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLOT BUT FAILED TO NOTIFY THE AUTHORITIES. "THIS HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR VIGILANCE." IT WAS THE DUTY "OF ONE AND ALL TO REPORT ANY SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES OR CONSPIRACY TO THE AUTHORITIES."

7. ANSWERING REPORTERS QUESTIONS, YAR'ADUA DISCLOSED THAT CIVILIANS WERE INVOLVED IN THE PLOT, BUT HE DECLINED TO GIVE NAMES "FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT WE REALIZE WHAT THE MOOD OF THE NATION IS."

8. ASKED WHETHER IT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED "THAT CERTAIN FOREIGN INTERESTS" WERE INVOLVED, YAR'ADUA REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT SAY ANYTHING UNTIL ALL INVESTIGATIONS WERE OVER.

9. NOTE: OF THE 19 ARMY OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN THAT YAR'ADUA MENTIONED BY NAME IN HIS STATEMENT, 14 WERE EXECUTED MARCH 11, ONE IS STILL AT LARGE, ONE WAS SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT (A LT. KEMLONG OR TEMLONG, WHO PUT BENDEL STATE GOVERNOR COL. INNIH UNDER HOUSE ARREST THE DAY OF THE COUP). THREE OTHERS ARE ASSUMED TO BE IN DETENTION STILL AWAITING DISPOSITION OF THEIR CASE.

10. COMMENT: IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT OFFICIAL FMG STATEMENT CONCENTRATED ON INTERNAL MOTIVATION FOR COUP, PRIMARILY DISGRUNTLEMENT AMONG ARMY OFFICERS. STATEMENT MAKES NO IMPLICATION OF ANY INVOLVEMENT BY FOREIGN POWERS, ALTHOUGH IN QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD YAR'ADUA DUCKED DIRECT QUESTION BY SAYING HE WOULD NOT COMMENT ON POSSIBLE FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT UNTIL ALL INVESTIGATIONS HAD BEEN COMPLETED. YAR'ADUA LEFT CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT THE FMG'S ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS WOULD REVEAL SOME DEGREE OF COMPLICITY IN THE COUP BY NIGERIAN CIVILIANS. WITH REGARD TO GOWON, TODAY'S PRESS REPORTS THAT YAR'ADUA SAID DIPLOMATIC AND LEGAL STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO ENSURE THE FORMER HEAD OF STATE'S EXTRADITION. HOWEVER, BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION OFFICERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH WHOM WE HAVE THUS FAR BEEN IN CONTACT DENY THAT OFFICIAL FMG EXTRADITION REQUEST HAS BEEN MADE AT THIS END.
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Message Attributes

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